

# Week 8 – Pharmaceuticalisation

- Module is focused on the radical ways in which health is transforming in contemporary societies
- Nettleton's paradigms show that social, scientific, technological and economic changes have influenced how we conceptualise and practice health. These paradigms are said to characterise epochs of medicine, the most recent being the advent of digital media have transformed health. It is important to recognise that these paradigms do not wholly displace what has preceded them. All forms of medicine remain relevant and, moreover, combine together. Nettleton's paradigms also imply that health and medicine will continue to transform.
- Pharmaceuticalisation is an ideal case study of the social, scientific, economic and political dynamics that transform health.

## Biomedical paradigms (Nettleton 2013)

Sarah Nettleton's paradigms of health draw attention to the transformations which have shaped medicine:

- Bedside medicine
  - Hospital medicine
  - Laboratory medicine
  - Surveillance medicine
  - E-scaped medicine
    - Implied transformation of health under changing historical, economic, scientific, political, social conditions
- Over the centuries, medicine has changed, from which someone would come to the village and see you in your bed or to the manor house and see you sick and infirm and do something
  - The invention of hospitals as populations grow, and as the discipline of medicine evolves
  - As science starts to emerge as a kind of sophisticated and diversified discipline of knowledge generation in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century
  - Suddenly we have the microbiology laboratory, giving us ways of dealing with health and illness
  - In 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century societies, with such big populations and so much knowledge available, we've become doctors to ourselves through a process of self-surveillance
  - Sarah Nettleton is playing a little bit with the idea of 'escape' with regard to e-scaped medicine, pointing to the fact that electronic digital media is changing medicine yet again, but she's alerting us to the transformation of systems of expertise and authority; her notion here is that medicine is escaping the traditional confines of the expert of scientists, surgeons and the lay population where we see the knowledge on high – through digital media this kind of relationship is changed quite a lot
  - What's behind Nettleton is social change; historical, technological, scientific, moral, sociological transformation of how we do health; this framing is all about the transforming social conditions in health and medicine and taking note of those, realising we've got a history and that we've come from somewhere, and that we're on the frontier of a new way of conceptualising and doing health
  - It's not as if we gave up on bedside medicine when the hospital was invented, or as if surveillance medicine or hospital isn't also important in the context of digital media, but all of these different paradigms coexist, and form each other, change each other and maybe clash in the sense that some of these paradigms aren't always commensurate in our own lives and in how we do health – it's important to hold onto the complexities implied by this paradigmatic shift across time

## The rise and rise of pharmaceutical technologies

- There's been a big escalation on drugs - it's an important part of our economy
- We're using drugs a lot across the population, as affluence increases in parts of the world where it hasn't been that prominent, drug markets are growing rapidly such as India, China, Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America
- We live in circumstances where it's impossible to think of health without also thinking about drugs – at some in the 20<sup>th</sup> century or at some point in this culture we've shifted from thinking drugs might help to thinking it's not possible to be healthy without our drugs; embedded in how we conceptualise health
- Probiotics, even yoghurt, vitamins and complimentary health products, chronic treatments for diabetes and statins for cholesterol are swept up in this domain; there's all sorts of examples where we can start to see that drugs are becoming enmeshed with how we live

## Sociological perspectives on pharmaceuticalisation

- Medicalisation
- Biomedicalisation
- Biopolitics and biological citizenship

## Medicalisation

- 'to make medical' (Conrad 2013)
- ADHD
- closely linked to pharmaceuticalisation